

Regional Leadership Forum Equity Session Glossary

Bias: An orientation toward something or someone which can be positive, negative or neutral. A bias can be informed by a previous experience so it can be rational.

Bigotry: Intolerant, usually negative, attitude which promotes one's own group and denigrates members of other groups.

Cultural Racism: Those aspects of society that overtly and covertly attribute value and normality to white people and whiteness, and devalue, stereotype and label people of color as "other," different, less than, or render them invisible.

Discrimination: The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, and other categories.

Diversity: The wide range of social groupings in the U.S. based on national, ethnic, racial, and other backgrounds that co-exist in American culture. The term is often used to include aspects of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class to name a few.

Dominant Culture: Dominant culture in a society refers to the established language, religion, values, rituals, and social customs on which the society was built. In an organization, the culture is heavily influenced by the standards and preferences of those at the top of the hierarchy.

Ethnicity: Membership in a particular cultural group. Often confused with race; ethnicity is a social construct that divides people into social groups based on shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history, ancestral geographical base, etc.

Equality: To treat everyone exactly the same. Focusing on equality instead of equity does not acknowledge the historical and contemporary systemic forces of oppression that have unfairly disadvantaged some groups.

Equity: The guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically underserved and underrepresented populations and these unbalanced conditions need to be addressed to provide equal opportunities to all groups.

Implicit Bias: An implicit bias is an unconscious association, belief, or attitude toward any social group. Due to implicit biases, people may often attribute certain qualities or characteristics to all members of a particular group, a phenomenon known as stereotyping. Implicit biases operate almost entirely on an unconscious level. While explicit biases and prejudices are intentional and controllable, implicit biases are less so.

Inclusion: An intentional effort to transform the status quo by creating opportunities for those who have been historically marginalized to meaningfully participate in processes, activities and decision/policy making. An inclusive process or environment embraces differences and is respectful in words/actions/thoughts of all people.

Intersectional: Multiple group memberships creates different experiences with privilege and oppression. For example, a Black woman in America does not experience gender inequalities in exactly the same way as a white woman, nor racial oppression identical to that experienced by a Black man. Each race and gender, or other group membership, intersection produces a qualitatively distinct life.

Institutional Racism: Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for whites and disadvantages for people from groups classified as non-white.

"ISMS": A way of describing any attitude, action or institutional structure that subordinates (oppresses) a person or group because of their social group: color (racism), gender (sexism), economic status (classism), older age (ageism), religion (anti-Semitism), sexual orientation (heterosexism), language/immigrant status (xenophobia), etc.

Marginalize: The process of social exclusion in which individuals or groups are relegated to the fringes of a society, being denied economic, political, and/or symbolic power.

Microaggression: The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

Oppression: The systemic and pervasive nature of social inequality woven throughout social institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousness. Oppression fuses institutional and systemic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry and social prejudice in a complex web of relationships and

structures that saturate most aspects of life in our society. Oppression allows the dominant class to maintain and inequitably distribute structural and institutional power and resources.

Prejudice: A pre-judgment or unjustifiable, and usually negative, attitude of one type of individual or groups toward another group and its members. Such negative attitudes are typically based on unsupported generalizations (or stereotypes) and not on experience or fact. Prejudice denies individual members of certain groups the right to be recognized and treated as individuals.

Privilege: The unearned social, political, economic, and psychological benefits of membership in a group that has institutional and structural power. Because hierarchies of privilege exist within the same group, people who are part of the group in power (men with respect to women, heterosexuals with respect to homosexuals, adults with respect to children, and rich people with respect to poor people) often don't feel they have privilege even when there is evidence of differential benefit.

Race: A social rather than a biological construct that artificially divides people into groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic and political needs of a society at a given period of time. Racial categories minimize ethnic groups.

Racialization: The ongoing process by which we all are shaped by racial grouping or "racialized" by structural policies/practices, institutional/organizational cultures, and interpersonal interactions. These daily experiences look and are experienced differently across various communities and categories of identity.

Racism: In the United States, racism is a complex system of beliefs and behaviors, grounded in a presumed superiority of the white race. These beliefs and behaviors are conscious and unconscious; personal and institutional; and result in the oppression of people of color.

Social Justice: A concept of fair and just relations between the individual and society. This is measured by the explicit and tacit terms for the distribution of power, wealth, education, healthcare, and other opportunities for personal activity and social privileges.

Systemic Racism/Institutional Racism: The arrangement of institutional, interpersonal, historical, and cultural dynamics in a way that consistently bestows resources, rights, and power to white people while denying them to people of color.

White Privilege: Refers to the advantages, entitlements, benefits and choices bestowed on people solely because they are white.

White Supremacy: The existence of racial power that denotes a system of structural or societal racism which privileges white people over others, regardless of the presence or the absence of racial hatred. Racial advantages occur at both a collective and an individual level, and both people of color and white people can perpetuate white dominant culture, resulting in the overall disenfranchisement/discrimination against people of color.